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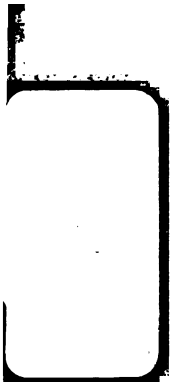

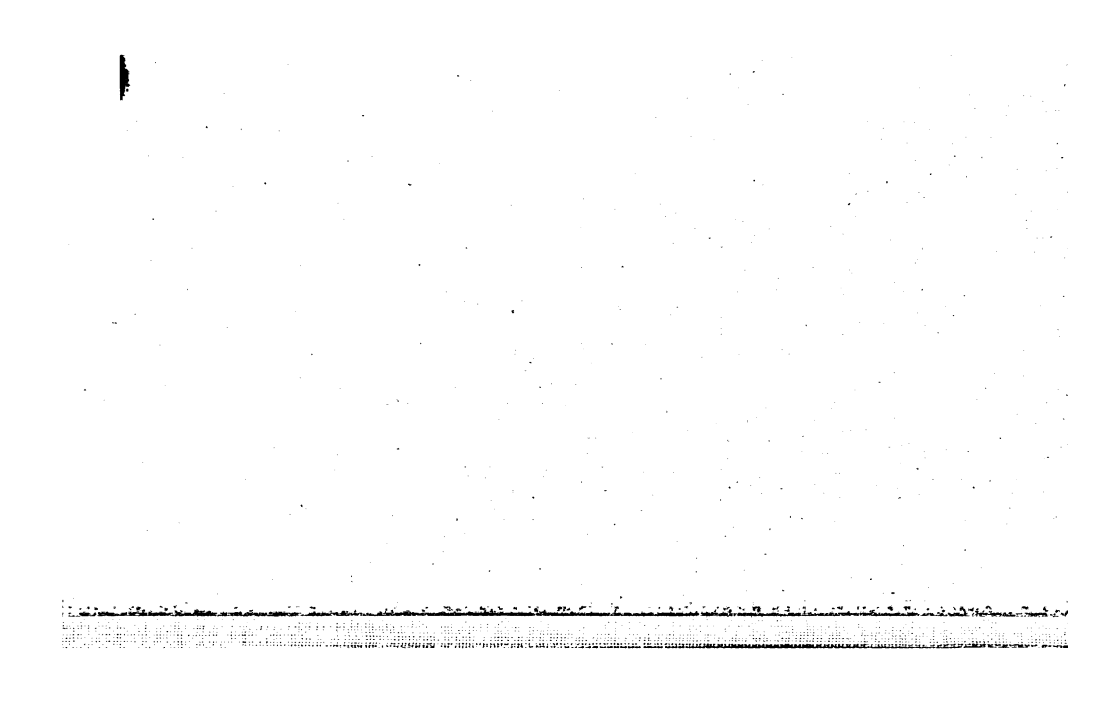

MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. WM. TENNENT,

FORMERLY OF

FREEHOLD, NEW-JERSEY.

The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—*Prov.* iv. 18.

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LIFE

OF

THE REV. WM. TENNENT.

Among the duties which every generation owes to those which are to succeed it, we may reckon the careful delineation of the characters of those whose example deserves, and may invite imitation. Example speaks louder than precept; and living, practical religion has a much greater effect on mankind than argument or eloquence. Hence, the lives of pious men become the most important sources of instruction and warning to posterity; while their exemplary conduct affords the best commentary on the religion they professed. But when such men have been remarkably favoured of God, with unusual degree of light and knowledge, and have been honoured by the special and extraordinary influ-

ences of his Spirit, and by the most manifest and wonderful interpositions of Divine Providence in their behalf, it becomes a duty of more than common obligation, to hand down to posterity the principal events of their lives, together with such useful inferences as they naturally suggest. A neglect of this duty, even by persons who may be conscious of the want of abilities necessary for the complete biographer, is greatly culpable; for if the strictest attention be paid to the truth of the facts related, and all exaggeration or partial representation be carefully avoided, the want of other furniture can be no excuse for burying in oblivion that conduct, which, if known, might edify and benefit the world.

The writer of these memoirs has difficulties of a peculiar kind to encounter, in attempting to sketch the life of that modest, humble, and worthy man, whose actions, exercises, and sentiments he wishes to record. Worldly men, who are emulous to transmit their names to following ages, take care to leave such materials for the future historian, as may secure the celebrity which they seek. But the humble follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose sole aim is the glory of God, in the welfare of immortal souls, goes on, from day to day, as seeing Him who is invisible, careful to approve himself only to the Searcher

of hearts, regardless of worldly fame or distinction, and leaving it to his heavenly Father to reward him openly, in the day of final account. The writer of such a man's life must principally rely on a personal acquaintance with him, and the communications of his intimate friends, for the information which shall be imparted to the public. In these circumstances, it is peculiarly embarrassing if some of the facts to be recorded are of such a nature, that it is most desirable to have their authenticity so fully established, that incredulity shall be confounded, and the sneer of the skeptical and profane lose its effect. But the writer of the following narrative, though placed in these circumstances, and having such facts to detail, has nevertheless determined to proceed. He has refreshed and corrected his own recollection, by the most careful inquiries that he could possibly make of others, until he is well assured, that what he shall state is incontestable truth. From the very nature of several things of which an account will be given, they do not, indeed, admit of any other direct testimony than that of the remarkable man to whom they relate. But if there ever was a person who deserved to be believed unreservedly on his own word it was he. He possessed an integrity of soul, and a soundness of judgment, which did actually secure him

an unlimited confidence from all who knew him. Every species of deception, falsehood, and exaggeration, he abhorred and scorned. He was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. With such materials then, as have been mentioned, and for a work of such character as has been hinted, the writer has undertaken his task. He has undertaken what he would most gladly have resigned to an abler hand; but from which, as no other offered, he dared not withhold his own. He could wish that speculative and even unbelieving minds might be instructed and convinced by these memoirs. But his principal object, and that in which he trusts he shall not be entirely disappointed, is to direct, assist, and comfort pious souls, groaning under the pressure of the calamities which they often have to endure in their pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world.

The late Rev. William Tennent, of Freehold, in the county of Monmouth, in the state of New-Jersey, of whom we write, was the second son of the Rev. William Tennent, minister of the gospel at Neshaminy, in Bucks county, in the state of Pennsylvania. This last gentleman was originally a minister of the church of England, in the then kingdom of Ireland, where he was born and received his education. He was chaplain to an Irish nobleman, but be-

ing conscientiously scrupulous of conforming to the terms imposed on the clergy of that kingdom, he was deprived of his living. He now became acquainted with the famous Gilbert Kennedy, of ——, a Presbyterian minister, who had also been persecuted for his religious principles, and soon after married his daughter. Finding it difficult to continue at home with any satisfactory degree of usefulness, and his family increasing, after a few years he determined to emigrate to America, where he was encouraged to hope for a greater liberty of conscience, as well as the prospect of being employed in extending the Redeemer's kingdom in that new world. He arrived at Philadelphia in the summer of 1718, with his wife, four sons, and one daughter. His sons were, Gilbert, who was afterwards pastor of the second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia; William, the subject of these memoirs; John, who became pastor of the church at Freehold, and died at the age of twenty-five years; and Charles, afterwards minister of the Presbyterian Church at Whiteclay creek, whence he removed to Buckingham, in Maryland.

William Tennent, the father, on his first coming to America, settled at East Chester, in the then province of New-York, and afterwards removed to Bedford. In a short time he was called to Bucks county, in

Pennsylvania, and preached at Bensalem and Smithfield: but soon after settled permanently at Neshaminy, in the same county. Being skilled in the Latin language so as to speak and write it almost as well as his mother tongue, a good proficient also in the other learned languages, and well read in divinity, he determined to set up a school for the instruction of youth, particularly of those designed for the gospel ministry, as the best service he could render to God and his new adopted country—education being then at a very low ebb. There appeared, in his apprehension, a very large field for the propagation of the gospel, could a sufficient number of faithful labourers be found for so great a harvest. A learned ministry, he well knew, was necessary to the sure foundation of the church of Christ, especially in a new country, so peculiarly exposed to every invader, and where the enemy might so successfully sow tares among the wheat. In pursuance of this design, he established an academy, and built a house, since known by the name of the *log college*.

Soon after his arrival in Bucks county, on full consideration, he left the church of England, and, to enlarge his sphere of usefulness, determined to join the Presbyterian church. Accordingly, he applied to the synod of Philadelphia for admission into

their communion; and, on due examination, and complying with their stated rules, he was very cordially received. At the first meeting of the synod afterwards, he addressed that venerable body in an elegant Latin oration, which added greatly to his celebrity, and increased the hopes of his friends as to the success of the institution he had founded. To erect and support such an important seminary of learning, out of his own private purse, at that early period, in a new country just rising from a savage wilderness, and to devote himself to so severe a service, in addition to his pastoral charge, was a boon to his generation, that at this day cannot be easily nor sufficiently appreciated.

His expectations, in a few years, were more than realized. In this institution, the principal men of the day, and many of the Presbyterian clergy were educated, and added greatly to the increase and useful- of their churches. The late Rev. Messrs. Rowland, Campbell, Lawrence, Beatty, Robinson, and Samuel Blair, with many others, were among the number of his pupils, and thought themselves honoured, by being considered as sons of this humble seminary. Here also his own four sons received their education, and were prepared for their important services. Had these been the only fruits of that infant academy,

America would have reason to rejoice, and to render thanks to that God who directed this gentleman to visit her shores.

His second son, William, who is the subject of these sketches, was born on the third day of June, 1705, in the county of Antrim, in Ireland, and was just turned of thirteen years when he arrived in America. He applied himself with much zeal and industry to his studies, and made great proficiency in the languages, particularly in the Latin. Being early impressed with a deep sense of divine things, he soon determined to follow the example of his father and elder brother, by devoting himself to the service of God in the ministry of the gospel. His brother Gilbert being called to the pastoral charge of the church at New-Brunswick, in New-Jersey, and making a very considerable figure as a useful and popular preacher, William determined, as he had completed his course in the languages, to study divinity under his brother. Accordingly, he left his father's house, with his consent and by his advice, and went to New-Brunswick. At his departure from home, which was considered as his setting out in life, his father addressed him with great affection, commending him to the favour and protection of that God, from whom he himself had received so much mercy, and who had directed him

in all his migrations. He gave him a small sum of money as the amount of all he could do for him, telling him that if he behaved well and did his duty, this was an ample provision for him; and if he should act otherwise, and prove ungrateful to a kind and gracious God, it was too much, and more than he deserved. Thus, with a pittance, and the blessing of a pious and affectionate parent, of more consequence than thousands of pounds, the young student set out in the world.

After a regular course of study in theology, Mr. Tennent was preparing for his examination by the Presbytery, as a candidate for the gospel ministry. His intense application affected his health, and brought on a pain in his breast, and a slight hectic. He soon became emaciated, and at length was like a living skeleton. His life was now threatened. He was attended by a physician, a young man who was attached to him by the strictest and warmest friendship. He grew worse and worse, till little hopes of life was left. In this situation his spirits failed him, and he began to entertain doubts of his final happiness. He was conversing one morning with his brother, in Latin, on the state of his soul, when he fainted and died away. After the usual time, he was laid out on a board, according to the common practice of the country,

and the neighbourhood were invited to attend his funeral on the next day. In the evening his physician and friend returned from a ride into the country, and was afflicted beyond measure at the news of his death. He could not be persuaded that it was certain; and on being told that one of the persons who had assisted in laying out the body thought he had observed a little tremor of the flesh under the arm, although the body was cold and stiff, he endeavoured to ascertain the fact. He first put his own hand into warm water, to make it as sensible as possible, and then felt under the arm, and at the heart, and affirmed that he felt an unusual warmth, though no one else could. He had the body restored to a warm bed, and insisted that the people who had been invited to the funeral, should be requested not to attend. To this the brother objected as absurd, the eyes being sunk, the lips discoloured, and the whole body cold and stiff. However, the doctor finally prevailed, and all probable means were used to discover symptoms of returning life. But the third day arrived, and no hopes were entertained of success but by the doctor, who never left him night nor day. The people were again invited, and assembled to attend the funeral. The doctor still objected, and at last confined his request for delay to one hour, then to

half an hour, and finally to a quarter of an hour. He had discovered that the tongue was much swoln, and threatened to crack. He was endeavouring to soften it by some emollient ointment put upon it with a feather, when the brother came in, about the expiration of the last period, and mistaking what the doctor was doing for an attempt to feed him, manifested some resentment, and said in a spirited tone, "It is shameful to be feeding a lifeless corpse;" and insisted with earnestness, that the funeral should immediately proceed. At this critical and important moment, the body, to the great alarm and astonishment of all present, opened its eyes, gave a dreadful groan, and sunk again into apparent death. This put an end to all thoughts of burying him, and every effort was again employed, in hopes of bringing about a speedy resuscitation. In about an hour, the eyes again opened, a heavy groan proceeded from the body, and again all appearance of animation vanished. In another hour, life seemed to return with more power, and a complete revival took place, to the great joy of the family and friends, and to the no small astonishment and conviction of very many who had been ridiculing the idea of restoring to life a dead body.

Mr. Tennent continued in so weak and low a state for six weeks, that great doubts

were entertained of his final recovery.—However, after that period, he recovered much faster, but it was about twelve months before he was completely restored. After he was able to walk the room, and to take notice of what passed around him, on a Sunday afternoon, his sister, who had staid from church to attend him, was reading in the Bible, when he took notice of it, and asked her what she had in her hand. She answered that she was reading the Bible. He replied, "What is the Bible? I know not what you mean." This affected the sister so much that she burst into tears, and informed him that he was once well acquainted with it. On her reporting this to the brother when he returned, Mr. Tennent was found upon examination, to be totally ignorant of every transaction of his life previous to his sickness. He could not read a single word, neither did he seem to have an idea of what it meant. As soon as he became capable of attention, he was taught to read and write, as children are usually taught, and afterwards began to learn the Latin language, under the tuition of his brother. One day as he was reciting a lesson in Cornelius Nepos, he suddenly started, clapped his hand to his head, as if something had hurt him, and made a pause. His brother asked him what was the matter; he said he felt a sudden shock in his

head, and it now seemed to him as if he had read that book before. By degrees his recollection was restored, and he could speak the Latin as fluently as before his sickness. His memory so completely revived, that he gained a perfect knowledge of the past transactions of his life, as if no difficulty had previously occurred. This event, at the time, made a considerable noise, and afforded not only matter of serious contemplation to the devout Christian, especially when connected with what follows in this narration, but furnished a subject of deep investigation and learned inquiry to the real philosopher and curious anatomist.

The writer of these memoirs was greatly interested by these uncommon events; and on a favourable occasion, earnestly pressed Mr. Tennent for a minute account of what his views and apprehensions were, while he lay in this extraordinary state of suspended animation. He discovered great reluctance to enter into any explanation of his perceptions and feelings at this time; but being importunately urged to do it, he at length consented, and proceeded with a solemnity not to be described.

"While I was conversing with my brother," said he, "on the state of my soul, and the fears I had entertained for my future welfare, I found myself, in an instant,

in another state of existence, under the direction of a superior Being, who ordered me to follow him. I was accordingly wafted along, I know not how, till I beheld at a distance an ineffable glory, the impression of which on my mind, it is impossible to communicate to mortal man. I immediately reflected on my happy change, and thought—Well, blessed be God! I am safe at last, notwithstanding all my fears. I saw an innumerable host of happy beings, surrounding the inexpressible glory, in acts of adoration and joyous worship; but I did not see any bodily shape or representation in the glorious appearance. I heard things unutterable. I heard their songs and hallelujahs, of thanksgiving and praise, with unspeakable rapture. I felt joy unutterable and full of glory. I then applied to my conductor, and requested leave to join the happy throng; on which he tapped me on the shoulder, and said, 'You must return to the earth.' This seemed like a sword through my heart. In an instant I recollect to have seen my brother standing before me, disputing with the doctor. The three days during which I had appeared lifeless, seemed to me not more than ten or twenty minutes. The idea of returning to this world of sorrow and trouble gave me such a shock, that I fainted repeatedly." He added, "Such was the ef-

fect on my mind of what I had seen and heard, that if it be possible for a human being to live entirely above the world and the things of it, for some time afterwards I was that person. The ravishing sounds of the songs and hallelujahs that I heard, and the very words that were uttered, were not out of my ears, when awake, for at least three years. All the kingdoms of the earth were in my sight as nothing and vanity; and so great were my ideas of heavenly glory, that nothing which did not in some measure relate to it, could command my serious attention."

The author has been particularly solicitous to obtain every confirmation of this extraordinary event in the life of Mr. Tennent. He, accordingly, wrote to every person he could think of, likely to have conversed with Mr. Tennent on the subject. He received several answers: but the following letter, from the worthy successor of Mr. Tennent in the pastoral charge of his church, will answer for the author's purpose:

"*Monmouth, New-Jersey, Dec.* 10, 1805.

"DEAR SIR,

"Agreeably to your request, I now send you, in writing, this remarkable account which I some time since gave you verbally,

respecting your good friend, my worthy predecessor, the late Rev. William Tennent, of this place. In a very free and feeling conversation on religion, and on the future rest and blessedness of the people of God, (while travelling together from Monmouth to Princeton) I mentioned to Mr. Tennent that I should be highly gratified in hearing from his own mouth, an account of the trance which he was said to have been in, unless the relation would be disagreeable to himself. After a short silence, he proceeded, saying, that he had been sick with a fever—that the fever increased, and he by degrees sunk under it. After some time (as his friends informed him) he died, or appeared to die, in the same manner as persons usually do—that in laying him out, one happened to draw his hand under the left arm, and perceived a small tremor in the flesh, that he was laid out, and was cold and stiff. The time for his funeral was appointed, and the people collected: but a young doctor, his particular friend, pleaded with great earnestness that he might not then be buried, as the tremor under the arm continued; that his brother, Gilbert, became impatient with the young gentleman, and said to him, "*What! a man not dead who is cold and stiff as a stake.*" The importunate young friend however prevailed; another day was

appointed for the burial, and the people separated. During this interval many means were made use of to discover if possible, some symptoms of life; but none appeared excepting the tremor. The doctor never left him for three nights and three days. The people met again to bury him; but could not, even then, obtain the consent of his friend, who pleaded for one hour more; and when that was gone, he pleaded for half an hour, and then for a quarter of an hour; when, just at the close of this period, on which hung his last hope, Mr. Tennent opened his eyes. They then pried open his mouth which was stiff, so as to get a quill into it, through which some liquid was conveyed into the stomach, and he by degrees recovered.

"This account, as intimated before, Mr. Tennent said he had received from his friends. I said to him, 'Sir, you seem to be one indeed raised from the dead, and may tell us what it is to die, and what you were sensible of while in that state.' He replied in the following words: 'As to dying—I found my fever increase, and I became weaker and weaker, until, all at once, I found myself in heaven as I thought. I saw no shape as to the Deity, but glory all unutterable!' Here he paused, as though unable to find words to express his views, let his bridle fall, and lifting up his hands,

proceeded, 'I can say as St. Paul did, I heard and I saw things all unutterable! I saw a great multitude before this glory apparently in the height of bliss, singing most melodiously. I was transported with my own situation, viewing all my troubles ended, and my rest and glory begun, and was about to join the great and happy multitude, when one came to me, looked me full in the face, laid his hands upon my shoulder, and said, 'You must go back.' These words went through me; nothing could have shocked me more; I cried out, Lord, must I go back! With this shock I opened my eyes in this world. When I saw I was in this world I fainted, then came to, and fainted for several times, as one probably would naturally have done in so weak a situation.'

"Mr. Tennent further informed me, that he had so entirely lost the recollection of his past life, and the benefit of his former studies, that he could neither understand what was spoken to him, nor write, nor read his own name; he had to begin all anew, and did not recollect that he had ever read before, until he had again learned his letters, and was able to pronounce the monosyllables, such as thee and thou. But, that as his strength returned, which was very slowly, his memory also returned. Yet, notwithstanding the extreme feebleness of his situation, his recollection of

what he saw, and heard while in heaven, as he supposed, and the sense of divine things which he there obtained, continued all the time in their full strength, so that he was continually in something like an ecstacy of mind. 'And,' said he, 'for three years, the sense of divine glory continued so great, and every thing else appeared so completely vain, when compared to heaven, that could I have had the world for stooping down for it, I believe I should not have thought of doing it.'"

It is not surprising, that after so affecting an account, strong solicitude should have been felt for further information as to the words, or the subjects of praise and adoration, which Mr. Tennent had heard. But when he was requested to communicate these, he gave a decided negative, adding, "You will know them, with many other particulars, hereafter, as you will find the whole among my papers;" alluding to his intention of leaving the writer hereof his executor, which precluded any further solicitation.

It was so ordered in the course of divine Providence, that the writer was sorely disappointed in his expectation of obtaining the papers here alluded to. Such, however, was the will of heaven! Mr. Tennent's death happened during the revolutionary war, when the enemy separated the writer

from him, so as to render it impracticable to attend him on a dying bed; and before it was possible to get to his house, after his death, (the writer being with the American army at the Valley Forge) his son came from Charleston, and took his mother, and his father's papers and property, and returned to Carolina. About 50 miles from Charleston, the son was suddenly taken sick, and died among entire strangers; and never since, though the writer was left executor to the son, could any trace of the father's papers be discovered by him.

The pious and candid reader is left to his own reflections on this very extraordinary occurrence. The facts have been stated, and they are unquestionable. The writer will only ask, whether it be contrary to the revealed truth, or to reason, to believe, that in every age of the world instances like that which is here recorded have occurred, to furnish living testimony of the reality of the invisible world, and of the infinite importance of eternal concerns.

As soon as circumstances would permit, Mr. Tennent was licensed, and begun to preach the everlasting gospel with great zeal and success. The death of his brother John, who had been some time settled as minister of the Presbyterian church at Free-

hold, in the county of Monmouth, New-Jersey, left that congregation in a destitute state.

The following entry in the records of the church at Freehold, shows the opinion of that church with regard to Mr. John Tennent's usefulness:—

"Lord's day, April 23, 1732.—The Reverend and dear Mr. John Tennent departed this life between eight and nine o'clock this morning. A mournful providence, and cause of great humiliation to this poor congregation, to be bereaved, in the flower of youth, of the most laborious, successful, well qualified, pious pastor this age afforded, though but a youth of twenty-five years, five months, and eleven days of age."

They had experienced so much spiritual benefit from the indefatigable labours and pious zeal of this able minister of Jesus Christ, that they soon turned their attention to his brother, who was received on trial, and after one year, was found to be no unworthy successor to so excellent a predecessor. In October, 1733, Mr. Tennent was regularly ordained their pastor, and continued so through the whole of a pretty long life—one of the best proofs of ministerial fidelity.

Although his salary was small, (it is thought under one hundred pounds,) yet the glebe belonging to the church was an

excellent plantation, on which he lived, and which with care and good farming, was capable of maintaining a family with comfort. But his inattention to the things of this world was so great, that he left the management of his temporal concerns wholly to a faithful servant, in whom he placed great confidence. After a short time, he found his worldly affairs were becoming embarrassed.—His steward reported to him that he was in debt to the merchant between twenty and thirty pounds, and he knew of no means of payment, as the crops had fallen short. Mr. Tennent mentioned this to an intimate friend, a merchant of New-York, who was on a visit at his house. His friend told him that this mode of life would not do—that he must get a wife to attend to his temporal affairs, and to comfort his leisure hours by conjugal endearments. He smiled at the idea, and assured him, it never would be the case, unless some friend would provide one for him; for he knew not how to go about it. His friend told him that he was ready to undertake the business; that he had a sister-in-law, one peculiarly suited in all respects to his character and circumstances: in short, that she was the very thing he ought to look for; and if he would go with him to New-York the next day, he would settle the negotiation for him. To this he soon

assented. The next evening found him in that city, and before noon, the day after he was introduced to Mrs. Noble. He was much pleased with her appearance; and, when left alone with her, abruptly told her, that he supposed her brother had informed her of his errand; that neither his time nor inclination would suffer him to use much ceremony; but that if she approved the measure, he would attend his charge on the next Sabbath, and return on Monday, be married, and immediately take her home. The lady, with some hesitation and difficulty, at last consented, being convinced, that his situation and circumstances rendered it proper. Thus, in one week, she found herself mistress of his house. She proved a most invaluable treasure to him—more than answering every thing said of her by an affectionate brother. She took the care of his temporal concerns upon her, extricated him from debt, and, by a happy union of prudence and economy, so managed all his worldly business, that in a few years his circumstances became easy and comfortable. In a word, in her was literally fulfilled the declaration of Solomon, that "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, and that her price is far above rubies." Besides several children who died in infancy, he had by her three sons, who attained the age of man-

hood; John, who studied physic, and died in the West Indies when about thirty-three years of age; William, a man of superior character, and minister of the independent church in Charleston, South Carolina, who died in the latter end of September, or beginning of October, A. D. 1777, about thirty-seven years old; and Gilbert, who also practised physic, and died at Freehold, before his father, aged twenty-eight years. Few parents could boast three sons of a more manly or handsome appearance; and the father gave them the most liberal education that the country could afford.

Mr. Tennent's inattention to earthly things continued till his eldest son was about three years old, when he led him out into the fields on a Lord's day, after public worship. The design of the walk was for religious meditation. As he went along accidentally casting his eyes on the child, a thought suddenly struck him, and he asked himself this question: "Should God in his providence take me hence, what would become of this child and its mother, for whom I have never taken any personal care to make provision? How can I answer this negligence to God and to them?" The impropriety of his inattention to the relative duties of life, which God had called him to, and the consideration of the sacred declaration, "that he who does not provide

for his own household, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," had such an impressive effect on his mind, that it almost deprived him of his senses. He saw his conduct, which before he thought arose entirely from a deep sense of divine things, in a point of light in which he never before had viewed it. He immediately attempted to return home, but so great was his distress, that it was with difficulty he could get along; till, all at once, he was relieved by as suddenly recurring to that text of scripture, which came into his mind with extraordinary force—"But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance." Such, however, was the effect of this unexpected scene on Mr. Tennent's mind and judgment, that ever afterwards he prudently attended to the temporal business of life, still however, in perfect subordination to the great things of eternity, and became fully convinced that God was to be faithfully served, as well by discharging relative duties in his love and fear, as by more immediate acts of devotion. He clearly perceived that every duty had its proper time and place, as well as motive; that we had a right, and were called of God, to eat and drink, and to be properly clothed; and, of course, that care should be taken to procure those things, provided that all be done to the glory of God in the duties of a

gospel minister, however, especially as they related to his pastoral charge, he still engaged with the utmost zeal and faithfulness; and was esteemed by all ranks and degrees, as far as his labours extended, as a fervent, useful, and successful preacher of the gospel.

His judgment of mankind was such as to give him a marked superiority, in this respect, over his contemporaries, and greatly aided him in his ministerial functions. He was scarcely ever mistaken in the character of a man with whom he conversed, though it was but for a few hours. He had an independent mind, which was seldom satisfied on important subjects without the best evidence that was to be had. His manner was remarkably impressive; and his sermons, although seldom published, were generally delivered with such indescribable power, that he was truly an able and a successful minister of the New Testament. He could say things from the pulpit, which, if said by almost any other man, would have been thought a violation of propriety; but by him they were delivered in a manner so peculiar to himself, and so extremely impressive, that they seldom failed to please and to instruct. As an instance of this, the following anecdote is given, of the truth of which the writer was a witness.

Mr. Tennent was passing through a town in the state of New Jersey, in which he was a stranger, and had never preached; and stopping at a friend's house to dine, was informed that it was a day of fasting and prayer in the congregation, on account of a very remarkable and severe drought, which threatened the most dangerous consequences to the fruits of the earth. His friend had just returned from church, and the intermission was but half an hour. Mr. Tennent was requested to preach, and with great difficulty consented, as he wished to proceed on his journey. At church the people were surprised to see a preacher wholly unknown to them, and entirely unexpected, ascend the pulpit. His whole appearance, in a travelling dress, covered with dust—wearing an old fashioned, large wig, discoloured like his clothes, and a long, meagre visage, engaged their attention, and excited their curiosity. On his rising up, instead of beginning to pray, as was the usual practice, he looked around the congregation with a piercing eye and earnest attention, and after a minute's profound silence, he addressed them with great solemnity in the following words: "My beloved brethren! I am told you have come here to-day to fast and pray; a very good work indeed, provided you have come with a sincere desire to glorify God there-

by; but if your design is merely to comply with a customary practice, or with the wish of your church officers, you are guilty of the greatest folly imaginable, as you had much better have staid at home and earned your three shillings and sixpence.* But if your minds are indeed impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, and you are really desirous of humbling yourselves before Almighty God, your heavenly Father, come join with me, and let us pray." This had an effect so uncommon and extraordinary on the congregation, that the utmost seriousness was universally manifested. The prayer and the sermon added greatly to the impressions already made, and tended to rouse the attention, influence the mind, command the affections, and increase the temper which had been so happily produced. Many had reason to bless God for this unexpected visit, and to reckon this day one of the happiest of their lives.

The writer having requested of the present Rev. Dr. William M. Tennent a written account of an anecdote relative to his uncle, which he had once heard him repeat verbally, received in reply the following letter:

* At that time the stated price for a day's labour.

"*Abington, January* 11, 1806.

"SIR,

"The anecdote of my venerable relative, the late William Tennent, of Freehold, which you wished me to send you, is as follows:

"During the greatest revival of religion, which took place under the ministry of Mr. Whitfield, and others distinguished for their piety and zeal at that period, Mr. Tennent was laboriously active, and much engaged to help forward the work; in the performance of which he met with strong and powerful temptations. The following is related as received, in substance, from his own lips, and may be considered as extraordinary and singularly striking.

"On the evening preceding public worship, which was to be attended the next day, he selected a subject for the discourse which was to be delivered, and made some progress in his preparations. In the morning he resumed the same subject, with an intention to extend his thoughts further on it, but was presently assaulted with a temptation that the Bible, which he then held in his hand, was not of divine authority, but the invention of man. He instantly endeavoured to repel the temptation by prayer, but his endeavours proved unavailing. The temptation continued, and fast-

ened upon him with greater strength, as the time advanced for public service. He lost all the thoughts which he had on his subject the preceding evening. He tried other subjects, but could get nothing for the people. The whole book of God, under that distressing state of mind, was a sealed book to him; and, to add to his affliction, he was, to use his own words, 'shut up in prayer.' A cloud, dark as that of Egypt, oppressed his mind.

"Thus agonized in spirit, he proceeded to the church, where he found a large congregation assembled, and waiting to hear the word; and then it was, he observed, that he was more deeply distressed than ever, and especially for the dishonour which he feared would fall upon religion, through him that day. He resolved, however, to attempt the service. He introduced it by singing a psalm, during which his agitations increased to the highest degree. When the moment for prayer commenced, he arose as one in the most perilous and painful situation, and, with arms extended to heaven, began with this outcry: 'Lord have mercy upon me?' Upon the utterance of this petition he was heard: the thick cloud instantly broke away, and an unspeakably joyful light shone in upon his soul; so that his spirit seemed to be caught up to the heavens, and he felt as though he

saw God, as Moses did on the Mount, face to face, and was carried forth to him, with an enlargement greater than he had ever before experienced, and on every page of the scriptures saw his divinity inscribed in brightest colours. The result was a deep solemnity on the face of the whole congregation, and the house, at the end of the prayer, was a Bochim. He gave them the subject of his evening meditations, which was brought to his full remembrance, with an overflowing abundance of other weighty and solemn matter. The Lord blessed the discourse, so that it proved the happy means of the conversion of about thirty persons. This day he spoke of, ever afterwards, as his harvest day. I am yours, with esteem.

WM. M. TENNENT."

While on this subject, we may introduce another anecdote of this wonderful man, to show the dealings of God with him, and the deep contemplations of his mind. He was attending the duties of the Lord's day in his own congregation, as usual, where the custom was to have morning and evening service, with only half an hour's intermission to relieve the attention. He had preached in the morning, and in the intermission had walked into the woods for meditation, the weather being warm. He

was reflecting on the infinite wisdom of God, as manifested in all his works, and particularly in the wonderful method of salvation, through the death and sufferings of his beloved Son. This subject suddenly opened on his mind with such a flood of light, that his views of the glory, and the infinite majesty of Jehovah, were so inexpressibly great, as to entirely overwhelm him, and he fell, almost lifeless to the ground. When he had revived a little, all he could do was to raise a fervent prayer that God would withdraw himself from him, or that he must perish under a view of his ineffable glory. When able to reflect on his situation, he could not but abhor himself as a weak and despicable worm, and seemed to be overcome with astonishment, that a creature so unworthy and insufficient, had ever dared to attempt the instruction of his fellow men in the nature and attributes of so glorious a Being. Overstaying his usual time, some of his elders went in search of him, and found him prostrate on the ground, unable to rise, and incapable of informing them of the cause. They raised him up, and, after some time, brought him to the church, and supported him to the pulpit, while he ascended on his hands and knees, to the no small astonishment of the congregation. He remained silent a considerable time,

earnestly supplicating Almighty God (as he told the writer) to hide himself from him, that he might be enabled to address his people, who were by this time lost in wonder to know what had produced this uncommon event. His prayers were heard, and he became able to stand up by holding the desk. He now began the most affecting and pathetic address that the congregation had ever received from him. He gave a surprising account of the views he had of the infinite wisdom of God, and greatly deplored his own incapacity to speak to them concerning a being so infinitely glorious beyond all his powers of description. He attempted to show something of what had been discovered to him of the astonishing wisdom of Jehovah, of which it was impossible for human nature to form adequate conceptions. He then broke out into so fervent and expressive a prayer, as greatly to surprise the congregation, and draw tears from every eye. A sermon followed, that continued the solemn scene, and made very lasting impressions on all the hearers.

The great increase of communicants in his church was a good evidence of his pastoral care and powerful preaching, as it exceeded that of most churches in the synod. But his labours were not confined to the pulpit. He was indefatigable in his endea-

vours to communicate in private families a savour of the knowledge of spiritual and divine things. In his parochial visits he used regularly to go through his congregation in order, so as to carry the unsearchable riches of Christ to every house. He earnestly pressed it on the conscience of parents to instruct their children at home by plain and easy questions, so as gradually to expand their young minds, and prepare them for the reception of the more practical doctrines of the gospel. In this Mr. Tennent has presented an excellent example to his brethren in the ministry; for certain it is, that more good may be done in a congregation, by this domestic mode of instruction, than any one can imagine who has not made the trial. Children and servants are in this way prepared for the teachings of the sanctuary, and to reap the full benefit of the word publicly preached. He made it a practice in all these visits to enforce practical religion on all, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, master and servant. To this he was particularly attentive, it being a favourite observation with him, "that he loved a religion that a man could live by."

Mr. Tennent carefully avoided the discussion of controversial subjects, unless especially called to it by particular circumstances; and then he was ever ready to as-

sign the reason of his faith. The following occurrence will show the general state of his mind and feelings in regard to such subjects. A couple of young clergymen, visiting at his house, entered into a dispute on the question, at that time much controverted in New-England, whether faith or repentance was first in order, in the conversion of a sinner. Not being able to determine the point, they agreed to make Mr. Tennent their umpire, and to dispute the subject at length before him. He accepted the proposal, and after a solemn debate for some time, his opinion being asked, he very gravely took his pipe from his mouth, looking out of his window, pointed to a man ploughing on a hill at some distance, and asked the young clergymen if they knew that man: on their answering in the negative, he told them it was one of his elders, who, to his full conviction, had been a sincere Christian for more than thirty years. "Now," said Mr. Tennent, "ask him whether faith or repentance came first, what do you think he would say?" They said they could not tell. "Then," says he, "I will tell you; he would say, that he cared not which came first, but that he had got them both. Now my friends," he added, "be careful that you have both a true faith and a sincere

repentance, and do not be greatly troubled which comes first." It is not, however, to be supposed by this that Mr. Tennent was unfriendly to a deep and accurate examination of all important theological doctrines. There were few more earnest than he to have young clergymen well instructed and thoroughly furnished for their work. This, indeed, was an object on which his heart was much set, and which he exerted himself greatly to promote.

Mr. Tennent was remarkably distinguished for a pointed attention to the particular circumstances and situation of the afflicted either in body or mind, and would visit them with as much care and attention as a physician, and frequently, indeed, proved an able one, to both body and soul. But his greatest talent was that of a peace maker, which he possessed in so eminent a degree, that probably none have exceeded, and very few have equalled him in it. He was sent for, far and near, to settle disputes, and heal difficulties, which arose in congregations; and happily for those concerned, he was generally successful; indeed, he would seldom relinquish his object till he had accomplished it.

But while this man of God was thus successful in promoting the interest of his fellow creatures, and in advancing the glory

of his Lord and Master, the great enemy of mankind was not likely to observe the destruction of his kingdom without making an effort to prevent it. As he assailed our blessed Saviour, in the days of his flesh, with all his art and all his power, so has he always made the faithful followers of the Redeemer the objects of his inveterate malice. If the good man, of whom we write, was greatly honoured by peculiar communications from on high, he was also very often the subject of the severe buffetings of that malignant and fallen spirit.

The time of which we are now speaking was remarkable for a great revival of religion,* in which Mr. Tennent was considerably instrumental, and in which a Mr. David Rowland, brought up with Mr. Tennent at the Log-College, was also very remarkable for his successful preaching among all ranks of people. Possessing a commanding eloquence, as well as other estimable qualities, he became very popular, and was much celebrated throughout the country. His celebrity and success were the subject of very serious regret to many careless worldlings, who placed all their happiness in the enjoyment of temporal objects, and considered and represented Mr.

* It was not far from A. D. 1774.

Rowland and his brethren as fanatics and hypocrites. This was especially applicable to many of the great men of the then province of New-Jersey, and particularly to the Chief Justice, who was well known for his disbelief of revelation. There was at this time, prowling through the country, a noted man, by the name of Tom Bell, whose knowledge and understanding were very considerable, and who greatly excelled in low art and cunning. His mind was totally debased, and his whole conduct betrayed a soul capable of descending to every species of iniquity. In all the arts of theft, robbery, fraud, deception, and defamation, he was so deeply skilled, and so thoroughly practised, that it is believed that he never had his equal in this country. He had been indicted in almost every one of the middle colonies; but his ingenuity and cunning always enabled him to escape punishment. This man unhappily resembled Mr. Rowland in his external appearance, so as hardly to be known from him, without the most careful examination.

It so happened that Tom Bell arrived one evening at a tavern in Princeton, dressed in a dark parson's grey frock. On his entering the tavern about dusk, the late John Stockton, Esq. of that town, a pious and respectable man, to whom Mr. Row-

land was well known, went up to Bell and addressed him as Mr. Rowland, and was inviting him to go home with him. Bell assured him of his mistake. It was with some difficulty that Mr. Stockton acknowledged his error, and then informed Bell, that it had arisen from his great resemblance to Mr. Rowland. This hint was sufficient for the prolific genius of that notorious impostor. The next day Bell went into the county of Hunterdon, and stopped in a congregation where Mr. Rowland had formerly preached once or twice, but where he was not intimately known. Here he met with a member of the congregation, to whom he introduced himself as the Rev. Mr. Rowland, who had preached to them some time before. This gentleman immediately invited him to his house, to spend the week; and begged him, as the people were without a minister, to preach for them on the next Sabbath, to which Bell agreed, and notice was accordingly given in the neighbourhood. The impostor was treated with every mark of attention and respect; and a private room was assigned to him, as a study, to prepare for the Sabbath. The sacred day arrived, and he was invited to ride to church with the ladies in the family wagon, and the master of the house accompanied them on an elegant

horse. When they had arrived near the church, Bell, on a sudden, discovered, that he had left his notes in his study, and proposed to ride back for them on the fine horse, by which means he should be able to return in time for the service. This proposal was instantly agreed to, and Bell mounted the horse, returned to the house, rifled the desk of his host, and made off with the horse. Wherever he stopped, he called himself the Rev. David Rowland.

At the time this event took place, Messrs. Tennent and Rowland had gone into Pennsylvania, or Maryland, with Mr. Joshua Anderson and Mr. Benjamin Stevens, (both members of a church contiguous to that where Bell had practised his fraud) on business of a religious nature. Soon after their return, Mr. Rowland was charged with the above robbery; he gave bonds to appear at the Court at Trenton, and the affair made a great noise throughout the colony. At the court of oyer and terminer, the judge charged the grand jury on the subject with great severity. After a long consideration, the jury returned into court without finding a bill. The judge reproved them in an angry manner, and ordered them out again. They again returned without finding a bill, and were again sent out with threatenings of severe

punishment if they persisted in their refusal. At last they agreed, and brought in a bill for the alleged crime. On the trial, Messrs. Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens appeared as witnesses, and fully proved an *alibi* in favour of Mr. Rowland, by swearing, that on the very day on which the robbery was committed, they were with Mr. Rowland, and heard him preach in Pennsylvania or Maryland. The jury accordingly acquitted him without hesitation, to the great disappointment and mortification of his prosecutors, and of many other enemies to the great revival of religion that had recently taken place; but to the great joy of the serious and well disposed.

The spirits hostile to the spread of the gospel were not, however, so easily overcome. In their view, an opportunity was now presented, favourable for inflicting a deep wound on the cause of Christianity; and, as if urged on by the malice of man's great enemy, they resolved that no means should be left untried—no art unemployed, for the destruction of those distinguished servants of God. Many and various were the circumstances which still contributed to inspire them with hopes of success. The testimony of the person who had been robbed was positive that Mr. Rowland was the robber; and this testimony was corro-

borated by that of a number of individuals who had seen Tom Bell personating Mr. Rowland, using his name, and in possession of the horse. These sons of Belial had been able, after great industry used for the purpose, to collect a mass of evidence of this kind, which they considered as establishing the fact; but Mr. Rowland was now out of their power by the verdict of *not guilty*. Their vengeance, therefore, was directed against the witnesses by whose testimony he had been cleared; and they were accordingly arraigned for perjury, before the court of quarter sessions in the county; and the grand jury received a strict charge, the plain import of which was, that these good men ought to be indicted.—After an examination of the testimony on one side only, as is the custom in such cases, the grand jury did accordingly find bills of indictment against Messrs. Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens, for wilful and corrupt perjury. Their enemies, and the enemies of the gospel now began to triumph. They gloried in the belief, that an indelible stain would be fixed on the professors of religion, and of consequence, on religion itself: and that this *new light*, by which they denominated all appearance of piety, would soon be extinguished for ever.

These indictments were removed to the supreme court; and poor Mr. Anderson, living in the county, and conscious of his entire innocence, could not brook the idea of laying under the odium of the hateful crime of perjury, and demanded a trial at the first court of oyer and terminer. This proved most seriously injurious to him; for he was pronounced guilty, and most cruelly and unjustly condemned to stand one hour on the court house steps, with a paper on his breast whereon was written, in large letters, "This is for wilful and corrupt perjury," which sentence was executed upon him.

Messrs. Tennent and Stevens were summoned to appear at the next court; and attended accordingly, depending on the aid of Mr. John Coxe, an eminent lawyer, who had been previously employed to conduct their defence. As Mr. Tennent was wholly unacquainted with the nature of forensic litigation, and did not know of any person living who could prove his innocence, (all the persons who were with him being indicted,) his only resource and consolation was to commit himself to the divine will, and, if he must suffer, to take it as from the hand of God, who, he well knew, could make even the wrath of man to

praise him;* and considering it as probable that he might suffer, he had prepared a sermon to be preached from the pillory, if that should be his fate. On his arrival at Trenton, he found the famous Mr. Smith, of New-York, father of the late chief justice of Canada, one of the ablest lawyers in America, and of a religious character, who had voluntarily attended to aid in his defence; also his brother Gilbert, who was now settled in the pastoral charge of the second Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, and who had brought Mr. John Kinsey, one of the first counsellors of that city, for the same purpose.

Messrs. Tennent and Stevens met these gentlemen at Mr. Coxe's the morning before the trial was to come on. Mr. Coxe requested that they would bring their witnesses, that they might examine them previously to their going into court. Mr. Tennent answered, that he did not know of any witnesses but God and his own conscience.—Mr. Coxe replied, "If you have no witnesses, Sir, the trial must be put off: otherwise you most certainly will be convicted. You well know the strong testimony that will be brought against you, and

* His affectionate congregation felt deeply interested in his critical situation, and kept a day of fasting and prayer on the occasion.

the exertions that are making to accomplish your ruin." Mr. Tennent replied, "I am sensible of all this; yet it never shall be said that I have delayed the trial, or been afraid to meet the justice of my country. I know my own innocence, and that God whose I am, and whom I serve, will never suffer me to fall by these snares of the devil, or by the wicked machinations of his agents or servants; therefore, gentlemen, go on to the trial." Messrs. Smith and Kinsey, who were both religious men, told him that his confidence and trust in God, as a Christian minister of the gospel, was well founded, and, before a heavenly tribunal, would be all important to him; but assured him it would not avail in an earthly court, and urged his consent to put off the trial. Mr. Tennent continued inflexible in his refusal; on which Mr. Coxe told him, that since he was determined to go to trial, he had the satisfaction of informing him, that they had discovered a flaw in the indictment, which might prove favourable to him on a demurrer. He asked for an explanation, and on finding that it was to admit the fact in a legal point of view, and rest on the law arising from it, Mr. Tennent broke out with great vehemence, saying that this was another snare of the devil, and before he would consent to it he would

suffer death. He assured his counsel that his confidence in God was so strong, and his assurance that he would bring about his deliverance in some way or other, was so great, that he did not wish them to delay the trial for a moment.

Mr. Stevens, whose faith was not of this description, and who was bowed down to the ground under the most gloomy apprehensions of suffering as his neighbour Mr. Anderson had done, eagerly seized the opportunity of escape that was offered, and was afterwards discharged on the exception.

Mr. Coxe still urged putting off the trial, charging Mr. Tennent with acting the part rather of a wild enthusiast, than of a meek and prudent Christian; but he insisted that they should proceed, and left them in astonishment, not knowing how to act, when the bell summoned them to court.

Mr. Tennent had not walked far in the street before he met a man and his wife, who stopped him, and asked if his name was not Tennent. He answered in the affirmative: and begged to know if they had any business with him. The man replied, "You best know." He told his name, and said that he was from a certain place (which he mentioned) in Pennsylvania or Maryland; that Messrs. Rowland, Tennent, An-

derson, and Stevens had lodged either at his house, or in a house wherein he and his wife had been servants, (it is not now certain which,) at a particular time, which he named; that on the following day they heard Messrs. Tennent and Rowland preach; that some nights before they left home, he and his wife waked out of a sound sleep, and each told the other a dream which had just occurred, and which proved to be the same in substance—to wit, that he, Mr. Tennent was at Trenton, in the greatest possible distress, and that it was in their power, and theirs only, to relieve him. Considering it as a remarkable dream only, they again went to sleep, and it was twice repeated, precisely in the same manner, to both of them. This made so deep an impression on their minds, that they set off, and here they were, and would know of him what they were to do.—Mr. Tennent went with them immediately to the court house, and his counsel, on examining the man and his wife, and finding their testimony to be full to the purpose, were, as they well might be, in perfect astonishment. Before the trial began, another person of a low character, called on Mr. Tennent, and told him that he was so harassed in conscience for the part he had been acting in this prosecution, that he could get no rest till he

had determined to come and make a full confession. He sent this man to his counsel also. Soon after, Mr. Stockton, from Princeton, appeared, and addressed his testimony. In short, they went to trial, and, notwithstanding the utmost exertions of the ablest counsel, who had been employed to aid the attorney-general against Mr. Tennent, the advocates on his side so traced every movement of the defendant on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday in question, and satisfied the jury so perfectly on the subject, that they did not hesitate honourably to acquit Mr. Tennent, by their unanimous verdict of *not guilty*, to the great confusion and mortification of his numerous opposers. Mr. Tennent assured the writer of this, that during the whole of this business, his spirits never failed him, and that he contemplated the possibility of his suffering so infamous a punishment as standing in the pillory, without dismay, and had made preparation, and was fully determined to deliver a sermon to the people, in that situation, if he should be placed in it.

He went from Trenton to Philadelphia with his brother, and, on his return, as he was rising the hill at the entrance of Trenton, without reflecting on what had happened, he accidently cast his eyes on the pillory, which suddenly so filled him with horror, as com-

pletely to unman him, and it was with great difficulty that he kept himself from falling from his horse. He reached the tavern door in considerable danger—was obliged to be assisted to dismount, and it was some time before he could so get the better of his fears and confusion, as to proceed on his journey. Such is the constitution of the human mind! It will often resist, with unshaken firmness, the severest external pressure and violence; and sometimes it yields without reason, when it has nothing to fear: or should we not rather say, such is the support which God sometimes affords to his people in the time of their necessity, and such the manner in which he leaves them to feel their own weakness when that necessity is past, that all the praise may be given where alone it is due.

The writer sincerely rejoices, that, though a number of the extraordinary incidents in the life of Mr. Tennent cannot be vouched by public testimony and authentic documents, yet the singular manner in which a gracious God did appear for this his faithful servant, in the time of that distress which has just been noticed, is a matter of public notoriety, and capable of being verified by the most unquestionable testimony and records.

This special instance of the interference of the righteous Judge of all the earth ought

to yield consolation to pious people in seasons of great difficulty and distress, where there is none that seem able to deliver them. Yet it ought to afford no encouragement to the enthusiast, who refuses to use the means of preservation and deliverance which God puts in his power. True confidence in God is always accompanied with the use of all lawful means, and with the rejection of all that are unlawful. It consists in an unshaken belief, that while right means are used, God will give that issue which shall be the most for his glory, and his people's good. The extraordinary occurrence here recorded may also serve as a solemn warning to the enemies of God's people, and to the advocates of infidelity, not to strive, by wicked and deep-laid machinations, to oppose the success of the gospel, nor to attempt to injure the persons and characters of those faithful servants of the Most High, whom sooner or later, he will vindicate, to the unspeakable confusion of all who have persecuted and traduced them.

Mr. Tennent was a man of most scrupulous integrity, and though of a very grave and solemn deportment, he had a remarkably cheerful disposition, and generally communicated his instructions with so much ease and pleasantry, as greatly to gain the confidence and affection of all with whom he

conversed, especially of children and young people. In all his intercourse with strangers and men of the world, he so managed his conversation, that while he seldom neglected a proper opportunity to impress the mind with serious things, he always made them covet his company, rather than avoid it; well knowing that there is a time for all things, and that even instruction and reproof, to be useful, must be prudently and seasonably given.

An instance of this disposition occurred in Virginia. The late Rev. Mr. Samuel Blair and Mr. Tennent were sent by the synod on a mission into that province. They stopped one evening at a tavern for the night, where they found a number of guests with whom they supped in a common room. After the table was cleared, our missionaries withdrew from it. Cards were then called for, and the landlord brought in a pack, and laid them on the table. One of the gentlemen very politely asked the missionaries if they would not take a cut with them, not knowing that they were clergymen. Mr. Tennent very pleasantly answered, "With all my heart, gentlemen, if you can convince us that thereby we can serve our Master's cause, or contribute any thing towards the success of our mission." This drew some smart reply from the gentlemen, when

Mr. T. with solemnity added, "We are ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We profess ourselves his servants; we are sent on his business, which is to persuade mankind to repent of their sins, and turn from them, and to accept of that happiness and salvation which is offered in the gospel." This very unexpected reply, delivered in a very tender though solemn manner, and with great apparent sincerity, so engaged the gentlemen's attention, that the cards were laid aside, and an opportunity was afforded, and cheerfully embraced, for explaining, in a sociable conversation, during the rest of the evening, some of the leading and most important doctrines of the gospel, to the satisfaction and apparent edification of the hearers.

Resignation to the will of God in all his dispensations, however dark and afflictive, was among the excellent graces that adorned the character of this man of God. He had been tried, in the course of God's providence, in various ways; but domestic afflictions, as yet, had not been laid upon him. The time, however, was now come, when his character was to be brightened by a severe test of his resignation and obedience—a test attended with many peculiarly distressing circumstances. His youngest son, who was one of the handsomest of men, had

just come into public life—had commenced the practice of physic, was married, and had one child. To the great distress of the parents, he discovered, though possessed of the sweetest temper and most agreeable manners, no regard to the things that belonged to his eternal peace. Wholly negligent of religion, he indulged, without restraint, in the gayety and follies of the world. The pious father was incessant at the throne of grace in behalf of his dissipated son; and was continually entertaining hopes that God would, by the influences of his Spirit, arrest him in his career, and bring him into the church of Christ, before his own summons should arrive; that he might die in peace, under the consoling hope of meeting his dear child in a better world. God, however, had determined otherwise, and the son while engaged in inoculating a number of persons, in a house he had obtained for the purpose, near his father's neighbourhood, was seized, in an unusually violent manner, with a raging fever. With the disorder, he was brought to a sudden and alarming view of his lost condition by nature, and the grievous transgressions of his past life. His sins were all set in dread array against him. A horrible darkness, and an awful dread of the eternal displeasure of Jehovah, fell on him, so as to make him the dreadful example of

a convinced sinner, trembling under the confounding presence of an angry God. The affectionate and pious father was constantly in prayer and supplication, that God would have mercy upon him. He seldom left the side of his bed. For many days the fever raged with unabated fury; but the immediate distresses which it occasioned, were lost or forgotten in the severer pains of an awakened conscience. Such was the height to which his anguish at last arose, that the bed on which he lay was shaken by the violent and united convulsions of mind and body. The parents were touched to the quick; and their unqualified submission to God, as a sovereign God, was put to the most rigorous proof. But in due time they came out of the furnace as gold tried in the fire. God, in his infinite and condescending grace and mercy, was at last pleased, in some measure, to hear the many prayers put up by the parents, and many pious friends for the relief of the poor sufferer. His views of the lost state of man by nature—of the only means of salvation, through the death and sufferings of the Saviour—of the necessity of the inward regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, became clear and consistent, and the importance of a practical acquaintance with these things was deeply and rationally impressed on his mind.

He now saw that salvation, which he had deemed almost or altogether hopeless to him, was possible. His mind became calm, and he attended to religious instruction and advice. In a short time he began to give as much evidence of a change of heart as a death-bed repentance (rarely to be greatly relied on) can easily afford. He sent for his companions in iniquity, and notwithstanding his disorder, exerted himself to the utmost to address them, which he did in the most solemn, awful, and impressive manner, as a person, who, by the infinite mercy of a prayer-hearing God, had been delivered from a hell gaping to receive him. He besought them, by all the terrors of everlasting destruction—by all the love they ought to bear to their own immortal souls —by the love of a crucified Jesus, who poured out his soul unto death, that they might live for ever—by his own awful sufferings and terrible example, that they would repent and turn to God.—This happy change was a reviving cordial to the distressed and suffering father. His soul was overjoyed, and his mouth was full of the praises of redeeming love. His mind and spirits were hereby prepared, with true resignation, to surrender the son of his advanced age to the God who gave him. After a few days more of severe suffering in body, but rejoic-

ing in mind, the son was removed from time to eternity. There being no minister in the neighbourhood, the father undertook to preach a funeral sermon. All the son's old companions that could be sent to, were especially invited, and the old gentleman preached in such a manner, with a particular address to the young men, as to astonish every hearer: and while the seriously inclined wondered and adored, the careless were confounded and greatly alarmed.

Scarcely had Mr. Tennent got over this heavy affliction, and returned to an active and useful course of life for a few years, when God again called him to another severe and arduous struggle of the same nature. His eldest son, John, promised fair to make a distinguished figure in life—had possessed a large share in the affections of both father and mother, and was more dear to their hearts than ever, since the death of his brother. It so happened that the father was called to New-York to heal some differences between the members of the church there. The next morning after his arrival, he went into a book-store, when one of the ministers of the episcopal church came in, and on being introduced to him, after the common salutations, told him that he condoled with him on the death of his eldest

son in the West-Indies. The old gentleman was at first struck dumb. With difficulty he soon inquired how the news came; and being informed that it was by a circuitous route, he suddenly turned and said, 'The will of the Lord be done.' The clergyman observed, that it was happy for him to be able so cordially to submit to it. Mr. Tennent replied, 'the Lord is my God—his will be done.' On being asked by the bookseller, who was his particular friend, to retire into the house, and endeavour to settle his mind, he answered, 'I am come on the Lord's business; my duty requires that I should finish it; when that is done, I shall have time enough to mourn for my son.' He immediately set off to attend his appointment, finished the business to his satisfaction, and next day returned home, where he found that a letter had been received by a neighbour, containing the same information which he had before received. Thus, on the most trying occasions, he showed the same submission to the allotment of divine providence that was discoverable in all his former conduct. The following extract from a letter, written at this time to the writer of this narrative, will show the temper of his mind in his own language: 'Freehold, March, 1776. My dear sir—Perhaps before this comes to

hand, you will be informed, that he who gave me the honourable epithet of a father, has, in his wise and unerring providence, written me childless.* My son is dead. This account I had yesterday from a letter written to a friend; the account is so straight, (though not circumstantial,) that I cannot doubt its truth. The tender mother has not heard it, nor do I intend she shall, until authenticated. This I mention as a caution to you, in case you should write to me before the matter is published. Let her dear heart have all possible ease, before the load, which it is likely will try her life, falls upon her. I know her attachment to that child; his conduct has been such as greatly endeared him to us. Our pains and expense in his education have been great, but infinitely short of what God has done for him. He has, therefore, the best right to him. Should we, then, were it in our power, obstruct his taking full possession of his own property? God forbid! This, sir, through God's goodness, is not only what I say but it is the temper of my soul, for which God only deserves the honour. It is now above fifty years since

* He seems, in the depth of his distress, to have forgotten that he had yet one son left, although he was 800 miles distant from him.

my soul resigned itself to God in Jesus Christ. I had then neither son nor daughter; I was completely satisfied with him and blessed be his name, I am so now. Have I then reason to cry out as if ruined? O! no, on the contrary, I have the utmost reason for thanksgiving, that he has not, in righteous judgment, deprived me of himself; in whom all fulness dwells. My wife and myself are now hastening to childhood; if spared a few years, we shall need one to lead us; and we shall look to you under God. All the benefit you can expect from so doing, will consist in the satisfaction of your own mind, that you have helped two old people through the last steps of their pilgrimage.' Thus did this pious man turn every event of life, however affiictive, to the praise and glory of God; and he seldom omitted an opportunity of inculcating the same disposition on all his acquaintance.

When the late Rev. George Whitefield was last in this country, Mr. Tennent paid him a visit as he was passing through New-Jersey. Mr. Whitefield and a number of other clergymen, among whom was Mr. Tennent, were invited to dinner by a gentleman in the neighbourhood where the late Mr. William Livingston, since Governor of New-Jersey resided, and who, with several other lay-gentlemen, were among the

guests. After dinner, in the course of an easy and pleasant conversation, Mr. Whitefield adverted to the difficulties attending the gospel ministry, arising from the small success with which their labours were crowned. He greatly lamented that all their zeal, activity, and fervour availed but little; said that he was weary with the burdens and fatigues of the day; declared that his great consolation was, that in a short time his work would be done, when he should depart and be with Christ; that the prospect of a speedy deliverance had supported his spirits, or that he should, before now, have sunk under his labour. He then appealed to the ministers around him, if it were not their great comfort that they should soon go to rest. They generally assented, except Mr. Tennent, who sat next to Mr. Whitefield in silence; and by his countenance discovered but little pleasure in the conversation. On which Mr. Whitefield, turning to him, and tapping him on the knee, said, "well, brother Tennent, you are the oldest man among us; do you not rejoice to think that your time is so near at hand, when you will be called home, and freed from all the difficulties attending this checkered scene?" Mr. T. bluntly answered, "I have no wish about it." Mr. W. pressed him again; and Mr. T. again answered,

"no, Sir, it is no pleasure to me at all; and if you knew your duty, it would be none to you. I have nothing to do with death, my business is to live as long as I can—as well as I can—and to serve my Lord and master as faithfully as I can, until he shall think proper to call me home." Mr. W. still urged for an explicit answer to his question, in case the time of death were left to his own choice. Mr. Tennent replied, "I have no choice about it; I am God's servant, and have engaged to do his business as long as he pleases to continue me therein. But now, brother, let me ask you a question. What do you think I would say if I was to send my man Tom into the field to plough; and if at noon I should go to the field, and find him lounging under a tree, and complaining, 'Master, the sun is very hot, and the ploughing hard and difficult; I am tired and weary of the work you have appointed me, and am overdone with the heat and burden of the day: do, master, let me return home, and be discharged from this hard service?' What would I say? Why, that he was an idle, lazy fellow; that it was his business to do the work that I had appointed him, until I, the proper judge, should think fit to call him home. Or, suppose you had hired a man to serve you faithfully for a given time, in a parti-

cular service, and he should, without any reason on your part and before he had performed half his service, become weary of it, and upon every occasion be expressing a wish to be discharged, or placed in other circumstances? Would you not call him a wicked and slothful servant, and unworthy the privileges of your employ?" The mild, pleasant and Christian-like manner, in which this reproof was administered, rather increased the social harmony and edifying conversation of the company; who became satisfied that it was very possible to err even in desiring, with undue earnestness, "to depart and be with Christ," which, in itself, is "far better," than to remain in this imperfect state; and that it is the duty of the Christian, in this respect, to say, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Among Mr. Tennent's qualifications, none were more conspicuous than his activity both of body and mind. He hated and despised sloth. He was almost always in action—never wearied in well doing, nor in serving his friends. His integrity and independence of spirit were observable on the slightest acquaintance. He was so great a lover of truth, that he could not bear the least aberration from it, even in a joke. He was remarkable for his candour and libe-

rality of sentiment, with regard to those who differed from him in opinion. His hospitality and domestic enjoyments were even proverbial.—His public spirit was always conspicuous, and his attachment to what he thought the best interests of his country, was ardent and inflexible. He took an early and decided part with his country in the commencement of the late revolutionary war. He was convinced that she was oppressed, and that her petitions to the sovereign of the mother country were constitutional, loyal, moderate and reasonable; that the treatment they received was irrational, tyrannical and intolerable. As he made it a rule, however, never to carry politics into the pulpit, he had no way to manifest his zeal for the public measures, but by his private prayers, and by his decided opinions delivered in private conversations. But, in this way, his sentiments became universally known, and he was considered as a warm friend to the American cause. Notwithstanding these political opinions, he was not blind to the errors of his countrymen, and especially to their moral and religious conduct. The following extract from a letter to the author of these sketches, dated February 14, 1775, strongly marks the temper of his mind:—"My very dear Sir—Your kind letter came to hand three

days since. Your comforts and sorrows are mine in no small degree; I share with you in both; the tie is such as death cannot dissolve. This is a day of darkness in my view, and few are in any degree properly affected with it. I have, through grace, perhaps as little to fear for myself, or mine, as any living. I humbly hope we are housed in Jesus; but I am distressed for the nation and land. The ruin of both is awfully threatened; and though now deferred, may ere long be accomplished, unless reformation takes place. It behooves every one to cry, 'spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach.' I know God is merciful; he has, notwithstanding, disinherited a people as dear to him as we ever were, whose sins were not more aggravated than ours. The Lord can deliver; but have we reason to think he will, having told us that he will 'wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalps of such as go on in their trespasses?' Is there any appearance of reformation? Yea, is it not the reverse? Are not our meetings, for the preservation of our liberty, often abused by excessive drinking, &c. &c.? Have not politics taken place of religion in all our conversations? Is it not become unconstitutional (to use the vulgar language) to mention God's name in company, unless by way

of dishonouring him? Are not things sacred neglected by some, and burlesqued by others? Is not the newspaper substituted for the Bible on the Lord's day—yea, at church? What will the end of these things be? Blessed be God, through Jesus Christ, he is for a sanctuary."

Mr. Tennent was on a visit, within less than twenty miles of New-York, when a British frigate attempted to pass the batteries, and to proceed up the North River, while General Washington lay with the American army in the city. A very heavy cannonading took place, which was mistaken by the surrounding country for a general attack on our army. Mr. Tennent was deeply affected, and after a violent struggle within himself, he turned to a friend or two present, and said, "Come, while our fellow-citizens are fighting, let us retire to prayer." They accordingly, went up into his room, where he most devoutly poured out his soul for about half an hour, in the most fervent prayers, wrestling with God in behalf of his suffering country.

About the latter end of February, or the beginning of March, 1777, Mr. Tennent was suddenly seized with a fever, attended with violent symptoms. He sent for his family physician, who was in the act of setting off for the legislature of the state, of

which he was a member. He called on his patient on the way, but could spend but a few minutes with him. He, however, examined carefully into Mr. T.'s complaints, and the symptoms attending his disorder. With great candour the physician informed his patient, that the attack appeared unusually violent: that the case required the best medical aid, and that it was out of his power to attend him. He feared that at his advanced age, there was not strength of nature sufficient to overcome so severe a shock, and that his symptoms scarcely admitted of a favourable prognostic. The good old man received this news with his usual submission to the divine will; for as he had always considered himself as bound for eternity, he had endeavoured so to live, that, when the summons should come, he would have nothing to do but to die. He calmly replied, "I am very sensible of the violence of my disorder; that it has racked my constitution to an uncommon degree, and beyond what I have ever before experienced, and that it is accompanied with symptoms of approaching dissolution; but, blessed be God, I have no wish to live, if it should be his will to call me hence." After a moment's pause, he seemed to recollect himself, and varied the expression thus:—"Blessed be God, I have no wish to

live, if it should be his will and pleasure to call me hence, unless it should be to see a happy issue to the severe and arduous controversy my country is engaged in; but even in this, the will of the Lord be done."

During his whole sickness, he continued perfectly resigned to the divine will, until death was swallowed up in victory, on the 8th day of March, 1777. He was buried in his own church at Freehold—a numerous concourse of people, composed not only of the members of his own congregation, but of the inhabitants of the whole adjacent country, attending his funeral.

Mr. Tennent was rather more than six feet high; of a spare thin visage, and of an erect carriage.—He had bright piercing eyes—a long sharp nose, and a long face. His general countenance was grave and solemn, but at all times cheerful and pleasant with his friends. It may be said of him, with peculiar propriety, that he appeared in an extraordinary manner, to live above the world, and all its allurements. He seemed habitually to have such clear views of spiritual and heavenly things, as afforded him much of the foretaste and enjoyment of them. His faith was really and experimentally "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen."—Literally his daily walk was with God; and

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he lived "as seeing him who is invisible." The divine presence with him was frequently manifested in his public ministrations, and in his private conduct. His ardent soul was seldom satisfied unless he was exerting himself, in some way or other, in public or private, in rendering kind offices, and effectual services of friendship, both in spiritual and temporal things, to his fellow-men.—Take him in his whole demeanour and conduct, there are few of whom it might more emphatically be said, that he lived the life, and died the death of the righteous.

He was well read in divinity, and was of sound orthodox principle. He professed himself a moderate Calvinist. The doctrines of man's depravity; the atonement of the Saviour; the absolute necessity of the all-powerful influence of the Spirit of God, to renew the heart and subdue the will—all in perfect consistence with the free-agency of the sinner, were among the leading articles of his faith. These doctrines, indeed, were generally interwoven in his public discourses, whatever might be the particular subject discussed. His success was often answerable to his exertions. His people loved him as a father—revered him as the pastor and bishop of their souls—obeyed him as their instructer, and delighted in his company and private conversation as a friend

and brother. He carefully avoided making a difference between his doctrines publicly taught and his private practice. Attending a synod, a few years before his death, a strange clergyman, whom they had never before seen, was introduced to the synod, and asked to preach in the evening. Mr. Tennent attended, and was much displeased with the sermon. As the congregation were going out of the church, Mr. Tennent, in the crowd, coming up to the preacher touched him on the shoulder, and said, "My brother, when I preach, I take care to save myself, whatever I do with my congregation." The clergyman looked behind him with surprise, and seeing a very grave man, said, "What do you mean, Sir?" Mr. Tennent answered, "You have been sending your whole congregation, synod and all, to perdition, and you have not even saved yourself. Whenever I preach, I make it a rule to save myself," and then abruptly left him, without his knowing who spoke to him.

At Mr. Tennent's death, the poor mourned for him as their patron, their comforter, and support; and the rich lamented over him as their departed pastor and friend: the public, at large, lost in him a firm asserter of the civil and religious interests of his country. He was truly a patriot, not in words and pretences—not in condemning

all who differed from him to proscription and death—but in acting in such a manner, as would have rendered his country most happy, if all had followed his example.—He insisted on his own rights and freedom of sentiment, but he was willing to let others enjoy the same privilege; and he thought it of as much importance to live and act well, as think and speak justly.

To conclude these imperfect sketches—May all who read the memoirs of this amiable and useful man fervently and constantly beseech that God, with whom is the residue of the spirit, that their life may be that of the righteous, so that their latter end may be like his; and that the Great Head of the Church, while He removes faithful and distinguished labourers from the gospel vineyard, may raise up others, who shall possess even a double portion of their spirit, and who shall be even more successful in winning souls unto Jesus Christ, the great bishop of souls.

THE END.